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U.S. Department of Agriculture
Agriculture Marketing Service
Fruit & Vegetable Program
Fresh Products Branch
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Room 0640-S
Washington, D.C. 20250-0295

Subject: Revision of Fees for the Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Terminal Market Inspection Services, Docket FV-04-310

Western Growers is an agricultural trade association whose 3,000 members grow, pack and ship 90% of the fresh vegetables and nearly 70% of the fresh fruits and nuts grown in Arizona and California; about one half of the nation's produce.

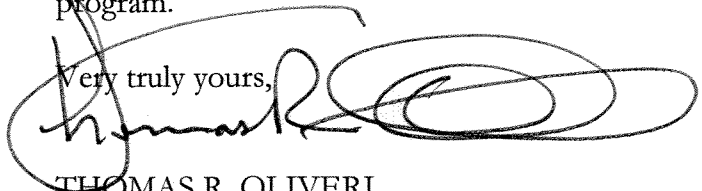
It is on behalf of Western Growers membership that I am writing this letter in support of the Proposed Rule to revised regulations governing the inspection and certification of fresh fruits and vegetables and other products by increasing by approximately 15% certain fees charged for the inspection of these products at destination market.

Western Growers Association realizes the fact that the inspection program is user fee based. Western Growers urges that the department utilize an efficient business model that can help infuse and enhance the program. Western Growers realizes that the fresh products branch as sought out cost saving opportunities and we asked that the department continue to strive on an efficient business model, so that sufficient savings can be generated so this increase can maintain the agency's mandated reserve balance and continue this terminal market inspection service program that the industry utilizes on a daily basis. The Terminal Market inspections have a tremendous impact on the day-to-day business transactions conducted in the fresh fruits and vegetable industry.

A timely USDA inspection can determine how a shipper is to be paid in a produce contract. Therefore it is imperative that the USDA provide current program operations and service for the fresh fruit and vegetable terminal market inspection program as well as improve the timeliness of such inspections and services.

Therefore Western Growers Association supports the revision of fees for the fresh fruit and vegetable terminal market inspection services as well as continues to look for an efficient business model for the program.

Very truly yours,



THOMAS R. OLIVERI

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